

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 3, 5, and 7-18 are currently pending. Claims 2, 4, and 6 have been cancelled without prejudice; and Claims 1, 3, 5, and 7-18 have been amended by the present amendment. The changes to the claims are supported by the originally filed specification and do not add new matter.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1 and 7 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over “the admitted prior art in Figure 10” (hereinafter “the Background Art”) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,706,313 to Blasiak et al. (hereinafter “the ‘313 patent”), U.S. Patent No. 5,996,104 to Herzberg (hereinafter “the ‘104 patent”), and U.S. Patent No. 5,995,562 to Koizumi (hereinafter “the ‘562 patent”); Claims 3, 5, 9, and 11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Background Art, the ‘104 patent, and the ‘562 patent, and U.S. Patent No. 6,269,124 to Nagayasu et al. (hereinafter “the ‘124 patent”);¹ Claims 8, 13, and 14 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,574,283 to Sakoda et al. (hereinafter “the ‘283 patent”) in view of the Background Art, the ‘313 patent, the ‘104 patent, and the ‘562 patent; Claims 10, 12, and 15-18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the ‘283 patent, the Background Art, the ‘313 patent, the ‘104 patent, the ‘562 patent, and the ‘124 patent; and Claims 2, 4, and 6 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

Applicants respectfully submit that the rejections of Claims 1, 3, and 5 are rendered moot by the present amendment to those claims. Claims 1, 3, and 5 have been amended to

¹ Applicants note that the rejection of Claims 3, 5, 9, and 11 on page 3 of the Office Action refers to the Watanabe et al. patent. However, pages 4 and 5 refer to the ‘562 patent. Accordingly, Applicants believe that the statement of the rejection on page 3 is incorrect and that the Koizumi patent rather than the Watanabe patent is being asserted in the rejection of Claims 3, 5, 9, and 11.

incorporate the limitations recited in dependent Claims 2, 4, and 6, respectively.

Accordingly, based on the indicated allowability of Claims 2, 4, and 6, Applicants respectfully submit that amended Claims 1, 3, and 5 are in condition for formal allowance.

Applicants respectfully submit that the rejections of independent Claims 7-18 are rendered moot by the present amendment to those claims. Claims 7, 8, 13, and 14 recite limitations analogous to the limitations recited in Claim 1. Moreover, Claims 7, 8, 13, and 14 have been amended to include the limitation recited in allowed Claim 2. Similarly, Claims 9, 10, 15, and 16 recite limitations analogous to the limitations recited in Claim 3. Moreover, Claims 9, 10, 15, and 16 have been amended to incorporate the limitations recited in allowed Claim 4. Similarly, Claims 11, 12, 17, and 18 recite limitations analogous to the limitations recited in Claim 5. Moreover, Claims 11, 12, 17, and 18 have been amended to incorporate the limitations in allowed Claim 6. Accordingly, based on the indicated allowability of Claims 2, 4, and 6, Applicants respectfully submit that independent Claims 7-18 patentably define over any proper combination of the Background Art and the '313, '104, '124, '283, and '562 patents.

Thus, it is respectfully submitted that independent Claims 1, 3, 5, and 7-18 patentably define over any proper combination of the Background Art and the '283, '124, '104, '313, and '562 patents.

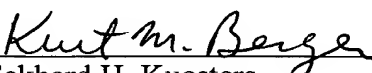
Consequently, in view of the present amendment and in light of the above discussion, the outstanding grounds for rejection are believed to have been overcome. The application as amended herewith is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. An early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,
MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C.

Customer Number
22850

Tel: (703) 413-3000
Fax: (703) 413 -2220
(OSMMN 06/04)


Eckhard H. Kuesters
Attorney of Record
Registration No. 28,870
Kurt M. Berger, Ph.D.
Registration No. 51,461

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